



LESSONS LEARNED RECORD OF INTERVIEW

Project Title and Code:			
LL-01 – Strategy and Planning			
Interview Title:			
Interview with (b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C)			
Interview Code:			
LL-01 (b)(3), (b)(6)			
Date/Time:			
10/20/2015; 1500-1600			
Location:			
New York, NY			
Purpose:			
To elicit interviewee's thoughts on U.S. reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan			
Interviewees: (Either list interviewees below, attach sign-in sheet to this document or hyperlink to a file)			
SIGAR Attendees:			
Candace Rondeaux, Matthew Sternenberger			
Sourcing Conditions (On the Record/On Background/etc.): On Background			
Recorded:	Yes	No	
Recording File Record Number (if recorded):			
Prepared By: (Name, title and date)			
Matthew Sternenberger			
Reviewed By: (Name, title and date)			
Key Topics:			
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Introduction• Personnel Benefits• Lessons Learned• Multilateralism• Regional Dynamics• Follow-up			

Introduction

(b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C)

Prior to 9/11 I believe that the refugee coordinator was one of the only people going into Afghanistan. I believe they went with a World Food Program mission. I also think there may have been one person who went to Helmand for counter narcotics. So there were only a few people that would go and we had no real presence. In the winter of 2001, [after 9/11] we sent in some people to start preparing the embassy to be reopened.



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The old embassy back then had a boy's side and a girl's side. The ramp up was so rapid. (b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C) was the Afghanistan political reporting officer. Embassy Islamabad was helping on the consular side and hosted a small Afghanistan country team of about 10-12 people that included a consular officer, DAS, chief of station, and someone from INL. I can't remember them all. These people had dual duties in both Afghanistan and Pakistan.

(b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C)

Embassy Islamabad, it was a big embassy. There was just a small group of hand-picked people who were selected to go in with Ryan Crocker. Afghanistan was unlike other places; people had a passion and some people kept coming back because of this passion.

Personnel Benefits

I would say that the best person to talk to about those days would be (b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C) was extolling the greatness of a Kabul tour. We wanted to make sure that the tour stayed all volunteer. It [Kabul] was a very rough situation and we didn't have the same benefits. At the time, linked assignments didn't exist and the [benefits] package was changing a lot. When linked assignments started, it was a great benefit. These intangibles were great and helped those people who were competing for next postings that were very popular. Linked assignments became more widely used (now in places like Libya, Yemen, and Iraq), and it is harder to be special today. The creation of these new benefits was a clear message about how these efforts [in hardship countries] applied to national security goals. This message was not always as clear from D.C. Now, another benefit is that a family can homestead. We also allow for spousal employment, which I believe was in place by 2007, and applies to adult dependents.

For SA it was different because Islamabad had an evacuation in March 2002. All of the Pakistan posts were on single status while at the same time trying to setup Kabul. (b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C)

We also had to reach out to people on a personal basis to identify the right people for these positions. In general we have done a great job getting the right skill sets. There was always a tradeoff and it would be great if we got the people with the necessary languages but that is hard with only one year tours. If you would be able to get data on personnel extensions that would be interesting.

(b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C) focus groups with personnel who just returned from Kabul. The goal was to identify what value or benefits mattered most to them. At the senior level, people saw the post as potential career jump, while at the mid-level people focused on the family benefits and extra income. We would then tweak the incentives based on these focus groups. (b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C)

Lessons Learned

1 - It is obvious now that entry-level, first tour personnel should not be going to these places. It is hard to mentor in such an environment and they are not setup up for success. These junior personnel are not seeing a normal embassy. We eventually noticed this issue and rectified it. Now if it is their second tour that is fine. Even if their first tour was in D.C. that would be fine as they would have learned something about the interagency.



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2 – The front office needs to have a policy vision and really solid management skills. There is a reason we had a lot of ambassadors at the embassy – it was like when you yell “mom” at a grocery store and a bunch of people turn around. That was the same at the embassy but with yelling “ambassador.” When running huge programs like economic development or counter narcotics, you want very senior people because programs were bigger than some embassies.

3 – 3161 [hiring authority] worked exceptionally well for police trainers. The largest number of 3161 hires were probably for police training, but I am not positive. The economic side did not need this function as much as the police, judicial and corrections efforts did.

Multilateralism

My impression is that we were always viewed as the biggest kid on the block. The USAID lead or the INL lead had big pieces of the mission. We were the main course, while other countries focused on trainings or workshops. Additionally, every country has a different fiscal year and different legislatures to report back to.

Regional Dynamics

(b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C)

From 2002-2004, we were thinking about the role of the ISI and Musharraf. I am in the middle on whether their actions [the ISI and Musharraf] acted intentionally or haphazardly. (b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C) I can't say that we didn't have tough talk. We were, at that same time, also talking about our GWOT partnerships, basing rights and negotiating the billion dollar package [to Pakistan].

Follow-up

1 – U.N. Tripartite Review: Looked at all programs in Afghanistan and driven by Ghani. This saved the UNAMA renewal.

(b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C)